

BEFORE THE TENNESSEE STATE BOARD OF EQUALIZATION

IN RE:	John W. & Carolyn M. Barton)	
	Map 116-13-0-C, Parcel 25.00CO)	Davidson County
	Residential Property)	
	Tax Year 2005)	

INITIAL DECISION AND ORDER

Statement of the Case

The subject property is presently valued as follows:

<u>LAND VALUE</u>	<u>IMPROVEMENT VALUE</u>	<u>TOTAL VALUE</u>	<u>ASSESSMENT</u>
\$30,000	\$138,500	\$168,500	\$42,125

An appeal has been filed on behalf of the property owners with the State Board of Equalization. The appeal was timely filed on September 21, 2005.

This matter was reviewed by the undersigned administrative law judge pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated, §§ 67-5-1412, 67-5-1501 and 67-5-1505. A jurisdictional hearing was conducted on March 31, 2006 at the Davidson County Property Assessor's Office. Present at the hearing were John W. Barton, the taxpayer, Jason Poling and Mr. Tommy Robertson, for the Property Assessor's Office.

FINDINGS OF FACT AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Subject property consists of a condominium located at 105 Leake Avenue, #25, in Nashville, Tennessee.

The initial issue is the value of the property as of January 1, 2005. The taxpayer, John W. Barton, contends that the property is worth \$148,800 based upon the fact that the sprinkler system had not been installed in his apartment and "one of the co-owners with the same square footage and floor plan as my apartment has had his appraised value reduced by \$20,700." (Exhibit #2)

The assessor contends that the property should be valued at \$167,300. In support of this position, three comparable sales were introduced and is marked as exhibit number 4 as part of the record in this cause.

The basis of valuation as stated in Tennessee Code Annotated Section 67-5-601(a) is that "[t]he value of all property shall be ascertained from the evidence of its sound, intrinsic and immediate value, for purposes of sale between a willing seller and a willing buyer without consideration of speculative values . . ."

After having reviewed all the evidence in this case, the administrative judge finds that the subject property should be valued at \$167,300. The taxpayer has assumed that

the property values were raised throughout the building by \$20,000.¹ The comparables used by the assessor (all within the building) do not substantiate that analysis.

Since the taxpayer is appealing from the determination of the Davidson County Board of Equalization, the burden of proof is on the taxpayer. See State Board of Equalization Rule 0600-1-.11(1) and *Big Fork Mining Company v. Tennessee Water Quality Control Board*, 620 S.W.2d 515 (Tenn. App. 1981).

The administrative judge finds that the taxpayer's equalization argument must be rejected. The administrative judge finds that the April 10, 1984 decision of the State Board of Equalization in *Laurel Hills Apartments, et al.* (Davidson County, Tax Years 1991-1992), holds that "as a matter of law property in Tennessee is required to be valued and equalized according to the 'Market Value Theory'." As stated by the Board, the Market Value Theory requires that property "be appraised annually at full market value and **equalized by application of the appropriate appraisal ratio. . .**" *Id.* at 1. (emphasis added)

The Assessment Appeals Commission elaborated upon the concept of equalization in *Franklin D. & Mildred J. Herndon* (Montgomery County, Tax Years 1989 and 1990) (June 24, 1991), when it rejected the taxpayer's equalization argument reasoning in pertinent part as follows:

In contending the entire property should be appraised at no more than \$60,000 for 1989 and 1990, the taxpayer is attempting to compare his appraisal with others. There are two flaws in this approach. First, while the taxpayer is certainly entitled to be appraised at no greater percentage of value than other taxpayers in Montgomery County on the basis of equalization, the assessor's proof establishes that this property is not appraised at any higher percentage of value than the level prevailing in Montgomery County for 1989 and 1990. That the taxpayer can find other properties which are more under appraised than average does not entitle him to similar treatment. Secondly, as was the case before the administrative judge, the taxpayer has produced an impressive number of "comparables" but has not adequately indicated how the properties compare to his own in all relevant respects. . .

Final Decision and Order at 2. See also *Earl and Edith LaFollette*, (Sevier County, Tax Years 1989 and 1990) (June 26, 1991), wherein the Commission rejected the taxpayer's equalization argument reasoning that "[t]he evidence of other tax appraised values might be relevant if it indicated that properties throughout the county were under appraised. . . ." Final Decision and Order at 3.

With respect to the issue of market value, the administrative judge finds that Mr. Coates simply introduced insufficient evidence to affirmatively establish the market value

¹ The reported cost to install the sprinkler system into each apartment.

of subject property as of January 1, 2005, the relevant assessment date pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 67-5-504(a).

Given the foregoing, the administrative judge would normally affirm the current appraisal of \$168,500 based upon the presumption of correctness attaching to the decision of the Davidson County Board of Equalization. In this case, however, the administrative judge finds that the assessor's own proof supports a minimal reduction in value.

ORDER

It is therefore ORDERED that the following value and assessment be adopted for tax year 2005:

<u>LAND VALUE</u>	<u>IMPROVEMENT VALUE</u>	<u>TOTAL VALUE</u>	<u>ASSESSMENT</u>
\$30,000	\$137,300	\$167,300	\$41,825

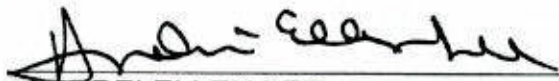
It is FURTHER ORDERED that any applicable hearing costs be assessed pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 67-5-1501(d) and State Board of Equalization Rule 0600-1-.17.

Pursuant to the Uniform Administrative Procedures Act, Tenn. Code Ann. §§ 4-5-301—325, Tenn. Code Ann. § 67-5-1501, and the Rules of Contested Case Procedure of the State Board of Equalization, the parties are advised of the following remedies:

1. A party may appeal this decision and order to the Assessment Appeals Commission pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 67-5-1501 and Rule 0600-1-.12 of the Contested Case Procedures of the State Board of Equalization. Tennessee Code Annotated § 67-5-1501(c) provides that an appeal **“must be filed within thirty (30) days from the date the initial decision is sent.”** Rule 0600-1-.12 of the Contested Case Procedures of the State Board of Equalization provides that the appeal be filed with the Executive Secretary of the State Board and that the appeal **“identify the allegedly erroneous finding(s) of fact and/or conclusion(s) of law in the initial order”**; or
2. A party may petition for reconsideration of this decision and order pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 4-5-317 within fifteen (15) days of the entry of the order. The petition for reconsideration must state the specific grounds upon which relief is requested. The filing of a petition for reconsideration is not a prerequisite for seeking administrative or judicial review; or
3. A party may petition for a stay of effectiveness of this decision and order pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 4-5-316 within seven (7) days of the entry of the order.

This order does not become final until an official certificate is issued by the Assessment Appeals Commission. Official certificates are normally issued seventy-five (75) days after the entry of the initial decision and order if no party has appealed.

ENTERED this 28th day of April, 2006.



ANDREI ELLEN LEE
ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE
TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF STATE
ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES DIVISION

c: John W. & Carolyn M. Barton
Jo Ann North, Assessor of Property